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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how preschool teachers can use observational and portfolio assessment techniques to evaluate both typical and special needs children in inclusive preschool classrooms. Explaining that portfolios can contain teacher observations, checklists of student activities, and samples of student work, it suggests techniques for organizing student portfolios and integrating them into the individualized education plans (IEPs) of special needs students. The final section concludes that portfolios, when combined with developmental checklists, constitute a realistic approach to developmentally appropriate assessment in the preschool classroom. An appendix contains a sample portfolio checklist. (Contains 16 references.) (MDM)

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Running head: PRESCHOOL STUDENT EVALUATION

ED 387 250

Student Evaluation in an Integrated Preschool Classroom

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Abstract

Evaluation of student's progress in a typical preschool classroom is a difficult task. It is even more difficult in an integrated classroom when the teacher must also evaluate children's progress on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as well. If the evaluation is done well it will provide the teacher with information concerning the individual's progress as well as serve as a driving force for the curriculum. An evaluation should be ongoing, developmentally appropriate and flexible. This article suggests a technique to provide the classroom teacher with a system of organizing student work, developmental checklists and anecdotal records into a portfolio that will provide the means of evaluating all children. It is hoped that the same system will be used to document growth within the regular program as well as on IEP goals, thereby eliminating the need for different approaches or duplicate work.

Student Evaluation in an Integrated Preschool Classroom

Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1990), define assessment as the process of observing and documenting children's work to serve as the basis for making educational decisions concerning that child. Assessment is used within a preschool classroom to guide curriculum and instruction, document a child's progress, and serve as a means for informing parents. (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990). This process often becomes very time-consuming for the teacher. In the case of integrated programs, there are sometimes different systems used to evaluate the children. A child's progress within the standard curriculum is evaluated one way and progress on IEP goals another. The present review will show how portfolios, consisting of student work, developmental checklists, and anecdotal records, can provide the early childhood teacher with a manageable method of assessing all children with one system.

Observation

Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1990) recommend assessment based on observation as the most effective means of getting to know children and the strategy that best fits National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for assessment. Observation avoids some of the disadvantages of

formal, standardized assessments such as an environment that is unfamiliar, requiring tasks that are not relevant, and viewing different aspects of the child at different times rather than the whole child (Linder, 1990; Meisels, 1993). In an early childhood program, observation allows the teacher to collect data without disrupting the normal routine and get a more accurate demonstration of the child's ability (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990).

Methods of Recording Observations

There are many different ways to record observations. Anecdotal records, running records, specimen records, time sampling, event sampling and the use of observation tools such as rating scales and checklists are a variety of methods discussed in current literature(Beaty, 1990; Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990; Meisels, 1993; Student Portfolios, 1993; Wright and Borland, 1993). These studies also highlight some advantages and disadvantages of each method. Frequently, the purpose of the observation is what determines which method would be most efficient(Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990; Beaty, 1990; Michigan State Board of Education, 1992).

Portfolios

With so many options available for collecting observations and so many reasons for doing observations, a manageable method for classroom teachers is necessary. The system needs to be

flexible, include the possibility for many different types of information and give a picture of the whole child on which educational strategies can be based. A portfolio is one possible system for organizing data on a child. It is a collection of a child's work and observational records that demonstrate the child's growth and progress over a period of time(Wright and Borland, 1993; Meisels, 1993).

Portfolios are not all the same. Decisions must be made concerning the content of a portfolio. Contents of a portfolio are either work samples and/or records of observations (Wright and Borland, 1993). Work samples can include actual student's work, photographs of children's constructions, videos, and tape recordings. Portfolios can consist of only children's work samples or a combination of work samples and observation records. (Student Portfolios, 1993; Wright and Borland, 1993)

Components of a Preschool Portfolio

For the preschool child, a portfolio which consists of work samples, checklists and anecdotal records would supply a manageable means of organizing information that would enable the teacher to plan curriculum, evaluate the child and evaluate progress on IEP goals.

Work samples from the child should be kept in the portfolio in chronological order. Each piece should be dated. Preschool students will not have the abundance of student work that will fit in a file that older children will have. Certainly samples

of the child's drawings and emergent writing (from a scribble to copying print) will be valuable. If affordable, photographs, videos and tape recordings would be excellent to show play and social skills. These electronic devices are not always available and if they are available, are not very convenient.

Some specific ideas of work samples were mentioned. Wright and Borland (1993) recommend that self-portraits be done at the beginning of the year and at scheduled intervals through the year to document cognitive growth. They also recommend standard samples, which are teacher selected activities the entire class participates in to help assess certain skills. Meisels (1993) recommends a similar approach, structuring repeated samples to be done at least three times a year. Having the children retell stories that have been read to them and observing the memory and sequencing skills is a possible component of a portfolio(Student Portfolios, 1993).

Checklists, another component of a student's portfolio, have many advantages. They are easy to use, can be used in the presence of the child or later based on memories, help focus observations, and are especially helpful in curriculum planning (Beaty, 1990). They can serve as a basis for parent conferences. They can demonstrate where the child is currently functioning and what skills will be emerging next. They depict progress of the child without comparison to other children. They can also depict progress on IEP goals when goals are based on items found on the

checklist. The disadvantages of checklists include lacking information on the quality of behavior, telling only if a behavior is present or not and may miss other important behaviors simply because they are not on the list (Beaty, 1990).

To minimize the disadvantages, the checklist can be paired with a third item within the portfolio, running records or anecdotal records. In this way, important behaviors that are not on the checklist will still be noted. Although some teachers have been reported to complain that anecdotal records require a lot of time, they also report that the information gained is worth it.

The checklist, paired with anecdotal or running records, can be a very important part of a preschool portfolio. The student work placed in the portfolio can support items on the checklist and give a fuller picture of the child's abilities.

Checklists

A checklist is a list of behaviors that are arranged in some order. Many checklists for young children are arranged in a developmental sequence. Beaty(1990) listed suggestions to consider when developing a checklist. The items should be short and in objective terms. They should be positive. They should be representative of a child's behavior but not all inclusive. All items should be easily understood by anyone using the checklist.

A checklist was developed after examining a variety of assessment tools (Barclay & Breheny, 1994; Beaty, 1990; Brigance, 1991; Charlesworth & Lind, 1990; Dodge, 1988; Hill, 1993;

Johnson-Martin, Attermeier & Hacker, 1990; Linder, 1993; McCarney, Ed.D. 1992; McClellen & Katz, 1993; Roskos & Neuman, 1994). This checklist (see Appendix) was developed to target preschool skills and reflect the Bucyrus Early Childhood Program. Items were selected based upon ease of observation as well as representing as closely as possible the range of behaviors which might be present in a typical class. It is hoped that this checklist, used along with anecdotal records and work samples, will provide our program with the tools necessary to evaluate all children's progress, including progress of children with special needs. By carefully choosing items for the checklist that are developmental and generally addressed by our curriculum, the portfolio should provide sufficient documentation for noting progress on IEP goals.

Conclusion

Portfolios, when combined with developmental checklists, constitute a realistic approach to developmentally appropriate assessment in a preschool classroom. Although portfolio use with older children has received the most attention, there are ways to utilize this approach in a preschool setting.

When developmental checklists, children's work samples and anecdotal or running records are combined in a portfolio, it creates a very useful assessment tool. By evaluating the data collected, a teacher can modify the curriculum to meet individual

strengths and needs. A teacher can also utilize the data with parents. The information can be the basis for documenting progress on IEP goals and generating new goals when necessary. The portfolio presents a picture of what the child can do and where the child is heading. A report card or progress report cannot demonstrate a child's growth as graphically as samples of the child's work. They also cannot pinpoint a child's strengths and areas which need support as checklists and other narrative records can. Therefore, the portfolio, with checklists, narrative records and work samples, represents a developmentally appropriate method of assessing young children in an integrated preschool classroom

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Appendix

Preschool Checklist

Rating: check items if consistently evident and indicate date
leave items blank if the item is inconsistent or not evident

SOCIAL

General Skills

		Date
____	Can answer whether he or she is a boy or a girl	_____
____	Can stay involved in an activity for a reasonable amount of time	_____
____	Maintains self control in a group situation (walks in line, etc.)	_____
____	Does not cling to classroom staff excessively	_____
____	Makes eye contact when speaking with adults or children	_____
____	Makes activity choices without teacher's help	_____
____	Can express anger in words rather than actions	_____
____	Takes turns without a fuss	_____
____	Negotiates and compromises with others	_____
____	Usually comes to classroom willingly	_____
____	Participates in classroom routine with adult direction	_____
____	Participates in classroom routine on own	_____

Social Play

____	Plays by self with or without objects	
____	Plays parallel to others with little or no interaction	_____
____	Plays parallel to others constructing or creating something	
____	Plays with others with some theme but lacks story line or common goal (3 or 4 children play firemen but each enacts own ideas independent of others)	_____
		_____
____	Plays cooperatively, negotiates roles and helps direct	_____
____	Plays cooperatively with a group constructing or creating something	_____
____	Gains access to ongoing groups at play or work	_____
		_____

COMMUNICATION

Spoken Language

____	Uses only one or two word phrases	
____	Speaks in simple sentences of more than 2 words, "I like to swing."	_____
____	Speaks well enough that an outsider understands	_____
		_____

___ Usually expresses self with at least 4 words _____
___ Says first and last name when asked _____
___ Verbally initiates interaction with others _____
___ Verbally indicates choice of activities with a short sentence _____
___ Sings song or says rhyme of about 30 words (words may be repeated) _____
___ Makes up and tells well-developed and detailed stories _____
___ Takes turn to talk and listens to others (sustains conversation for several turns) _____
___ Plays with rhyming words _____

COGNITIVE

General Knowledge

Points to Matches Names

_____ _____ _____ Shapes: circle, square, triangle, star

_____ _____ _____ Colors: basic eight

___ Knows what happened yesterday _____
___ Plays simple games with little adult supervision _____
___ Sorts objects by color, shape or name (all cars, blue, etc.) _____
___ Sorts objects by category (toys, animals, food) _____
___ Can work 4 piece puzzles _____8 piece _____10+ piece

Drawing

___ Scribbles on paper _____
___ Forms basic shapes _____
___ Draws human as circle with arms and legs attached _____
___ Draws identifiable object without model _____

Block Play

___ Can pile blocks and lay flat(may use cars on block roads) _____
___ Can build enclosures(may be used as fences or as buildings) _____
___ Can build bridges _____
___ Can build symmetrical buildings and use patterns of blocks _____
___ Can build complex structures and often label them for dramatic play _____

Number Concepts

___ Can rote count to 5 ____to 10 ____ to 20 ____to 20+ _____
___ Can count up to 3 objects(in a row) ____ to 5 ____ to 10 _____
___ Can take up to 3 objects ____ up to 5 ____up to 10
___ Can put up to 5 items in order by size (height, width, length) _____
___ Can demonstrate groups of objects that are more and less than a given group _____

Literacy

____ Shows interest when stories are read _____
____ Can sit for a time and read or look at a book independently _____
____ Can picture-read, tell a story from the pictures _____
____ Recalls most of the essential parts and characters of a story _____
____ Can name some letters and numbers
____ Can recognize own name in print in the classroom _____

MOTOR SKILLS

Gross Motor

____ Walks down steps with alternating feet _____
____ Runs with control over speed and direction _____
____ Jumps over an obstacle with two feet _____
____ Pedals a tricycle _____
____ Hops 3x on one foot _____Hops forward 8x with each foot _____
____ Kicks a rolled ball _____
____ Throws a ball using a step-throw sequence _____
____ Catches a ball without trapping it against the body _____
____ Gallops _____ Skips _____

Fine Motor

____ Can screw on lids _____
____ Can usually button large buttons _____
____ Can usually start and zip a jacket or vest _____
____ Can usually snap _____
____ Can fold a paper in half (without a demonstration) _____

Cutting Skills

____ Can hold scissors correctly _____
____ Can snip paper _____
____ Can cut smoothly across paper _____
____ Can cut simple shapes (circle, square) smoothly on a line _____
____ Can cut out complex pictures

Writing Skills

____ Can copy: ____a circle _____a cross ____ a square ____an x
____ a diagonal line ____ a V ____a triangle
____ Can accurately trace a simple stencil
____ Pretends to write by scribbling horizontally ____
____ Pretends to write using some real letters ____

___ Can copy own first name ___

___ Can write name, using real letters, in identifiable fashion ___

___ Can write name correctly in linear manner ___